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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0534

INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS IMMEDIATE

RUEAHND/COMJTF-B SOTO CANO HO IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUMIAAA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE

RUEAHND/CDRJTFB SOTO CANO HO IMMEDIATE

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RULGPSU/COMSOCOSOUTH IMMEDIATE

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUMIAAA/USOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TEGUCIGALPA 000831

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/09/2019

TAGS: PGOV KDEM PREL HO

SUBJECT: TFH01: FOREIGN MINISTER DELEGATION FACES DE FACTO INTRANSIGENCE, GRANDSTANDING

REF: A. TEGUCIGALPA 813

1B. TEGUCIGALPA 809

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Simon Henshaw, reasons 1.4 (d)

11. (C) Summary: The OAS delegation of foreign ministers and OAS Secretary General which visited Honduras August 24-25 to press all parties to accept the San Jose Accord as the peaceful solution to the current political crisis concluded without a concrete result, due primarily to inflexibility on the part of the de facto regime. The delegation met with members of civil society, all branches of government and supporters of the ousted Zelaya administration. Most regime-supporters expressed greater hope in November elections as a way out of the crisis than in a negotiated accord. De facto president Roberto Micheletti turned the delegation's scheduled meeting into a public show which was televised nationally after the delegation's departure. A telephone conference with President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya was also unproductive, leading some ministers to speculate as to if a different democratic solution needed to be found. The delegation's press statement at the end of their visit was covered in the local media. The de facto negotiating team informed the delegation at the end of its visit that the team planned to return to Washington August 26 to continue talks with the OAS. The OAS delegation expressed appreciation for the U.S. suspension of visa operations and for air support. End summary.

12. (SBU) OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza accompanied a delegation of foreign ministers from Argentina, Canada, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico, and Panama who came to Honduras under the aegis of the OAS to press all sides in the political crisis to accept the San Jose Accord as the best peaceful solution to the crisis. The delegation met with President Zelaya's wife and daughter, representatives of the Zelaya administration, members of the National Congress on both sides of the conflict, presidential candidates, members of the Supreme Court (CSJ), the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), church leaders, business leaders, civil society representatives, military leadership and de facto regime president Roberto Micheletti. The delegation held a telephone conference call with President Zelaya and then concluded their visit by making a statement to the press.

13. (SBU) According to Embassy contacts and press reports, the prevailing themes of most de facto regime representatives and

supporters was a concern over whether the accord provided sufficient safeguards against further violations once implemented, and that many people's hopes rested more in successful elections in November than in a negotiated accord.

¶4. (C) Neil Reeder, Canadian Ambassador to Honduras resident in Costa Rica provided a readout of the delegation's visit to the G-16 donors group on August 26. He said the two major points of the San Jose Accord for which the delegation encountered opposition were the return of President Zelaya and amnesty, which Micheletti supporters told the delegation they view as recognition of impunity despite the fact that representatives of the de facto regime agreed to this provision during negotiations in San Jose. Reeder said the delegation seemed to be surprised by how polarized Honduran society was regarding the crisis as well as the inflexibility of the de facto regime's position. Reeder reported that the Zelaya camp assured the delegation that Zelaya is ready to sign the San Jose Accord and will abide by it. According to Reeder, leftist parties told the delegation that they would disrupt the elections if Zelaya was not permitted to return. Reeder noted that the delegation delivered the message to its interlocutors that lack of acceptance of the San Jose Accord could have an impact on donor aid to Honduras.

¶5. (SBU) The delegation met with representatives of 21 Congressional Deputies who signed a joint statement opposing the coup and the subsequent decisions of Congress to replace the cabinet and impose measures to limit opposition to the de facto regime.

¶6. (U) The delegation's meeting with Micheletti was delayed

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several times during the visit, and when the delegation finally was able to meet with Micheletti, he had arranged for cameras to record the entire session. Micheletti recited the political rhetoric used by the de facto regime from the start of the crisis that the events of June 28 were legal and in defense of the Constitution, and that the Honduran people were prepared to ride out international pressure. He repeated his offer to resign, contingent on President Zelaya returning only to stand trial. Micheletti reiterated the public, personal statements he had made before against Insulza and his first visit immediately following the coup. The de facto regime then televised the video of the meeting at least three times the following day as a "cadena," forcing all other television transmissions to cease while the video was on the air.

¶7. (U) Local press covered the visit largely in accordance with their bias. Pro-coup daily paper "El Heraldo" repeated the Micheletti themes, and did not present the opposing viewpoints, though it reprinted the delegation's departing press statement in full. The evening news broadcast on Channel Four was somewhat more balanced, noting the de facto regime's claim they had anticipated the USG decision to suspend visa services, and stated that CAFTA terms would prevent the United States from imposing a significant economic embargo, but also covering the delegation press release, as well as a statement from First Lady Xiomara Castro de Zelaya on behalf of President Zelaya. On moderate Channel 10, Zelaya supporter and Democratic Unification Party presidential candidate Cesar Ham presented a partial readout of his meeting with the delegation, noting that they said the OAS would not observe November elections. (As a result of an attack on its transmission equipment (ref B), pro-Zelaya television Channel 36 remained off the air.)

¶8. (C) Insulza aide John Biehl (protect) told Charge that the delegation had left discouraged with the de facto regime authorities and supporters, total lack of flexibility. He said almost all, including Supreme Court members, the Attorney General, business leaders, the military hierarchy and Cardinal Oscar Andres Rodriguez gave speeches arguing that the June 28 events were completely legal and

constitutional, while the return of Zelaya and implementation of the San Jose Accords would be unconstitutional. Biehl noted that most of these representatives spent at least an hour in another room of the hotel with the de facto regime negotiators to the OAS before meeting with the delegation; he believed this explained the almost verbatim presentations. Micheletti was polite, but inflexible in his meeting with the delegation, according to Biehl (he made no mention of attacks against Insulza). Micheletti said he was willing to resign the de facto presidency, but only if Zelaya resigned as well and if all international sanctions were dropped.

¶9. (C) Zelaya also lost some support from the ministers during a telephone conference at the end of their visit, according to Biehl. Zelaya appeared out of touch, speaking of his supporters being thrown in jail and tortured and dying by the hundreds. This led some ministers to question whether or not a democratic solution without Zelaya needed to be considered. (Charge interjected that the issue was the illegal and unconstitutional removal of Zelaya and that Zelaya's return appeared to be the only solution.)

¶10. (C) Upon departure late afternoon on August 25, Biehl reported that he had been contacted by de facto negotiating team member Arturo Corrales who told him that the team would travel to Washington August 26 to continue talks with the OAS. (The local OAS representative reported August 26 that Corrales had been seen boarding that morning's flight to Miami.) Biehl told Charge that Insulza and the ministers had been very appreciative of the U.S. announcement of the closure of the visa section (Charge had passed the information directly to Insulza), saying that it had given them support at a particularly difficult time. He also heaped praise on our air support, saying that the ministers were thankful. (Comment: The C-17 made quite an impression. End comment.)

¶11. (C) Comment: The de facto regime's complete lack of

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flexibility was surprising. The regime held a series of meetings over the weekend to discuss the delegation visit; it is now apparent that the meetings hardened the regime's stance and that the participants agreed to form a united front against any compromise. If there is a silver lining to this cloud, it is that Insulza and the ministers now have a clearer view of the situation on the ground. Biehl is close to Insulza and his comment on other democratic solutions may reflect Insulza's thinking. It is hard, however, to envision a democratic solution that does not include the return of President Zelaya.

HENSHAW